



The Ruskin Update

June, 2007
Volume 3 Issue 4

Ruskin's Free Online Resource Program Passes Assembly

Assemblymember Ira Ruskin's AB 577 passed the Assembly floor with a 79-0 vote. AB 577 creates a pioneering pilot program at Foothill Community College to facilitate access by students to online public domain or Open Education resources. The first of its kind in California, this program will train California Community College faculty throughout the state to take advantage of these resources, reducing the cost of college for students and parents.

Open Education Resources (OER) are learning materials or resources whose copyrights have expired, or which have been released with an intellectual property license that permits their free use by others. OER include items such as courses, course materials, textbooks, streaming video of classroom lectures, tests, software and any other tools, materials or techniques used to transmit knowledge that have an impact on teaching and learning.

"Textbooks are increasingly becoming cost-prohibitive for students," said Assemblymember Ira Ruskin. "The price of one required calculus textbook at Foothill Community College is \$173. That's more than 23 hours of

work at California's minimum wage."

Eligible students can readily obtain scholarships to pay tuition, including fee-waivers. But financial aid for textbooks, which often cost far more than tuition at community college, is much harder to come by, frequently involving an intrusive and bureaucratic application process. And when assistance is offered there is never enough to go around.

"With the rising cost of tuition, fees, living expenses and diminishing student aid, the price of textbooks represents an increasing portion of the overall price of college," said Ruskin. "It is essential that we as legislators are responsive to the needs of our college students. AB 577 will give faculty more options to help ease the burden textbooks put upon our students. This bill marks the level of commitment California has made to ensure that all Californians have access to a community college. This is an opportunity for California to become a leader in the nationwide effort for textbook affordability."

Assembly Passes 13 of 14 Ruskin Bills Before Deadline

The legislative deadline to pass Assembly bills off the Assembly floor was June 8th. Assemblymember Ruskin gained approval for 13 of his 14 bills that reached the floor.

Included among Mr. Ruskin's legislation that will now move on to the Senate are a measure to make all of California state owned or leased buildings "green," a bill to reduce deceptive advertising during political campaigns, a pilot program at Foothill College to reduce the cost of college (see article above), a bill to improve water conservation in California industry, and another to protect wildlife corridors around the state and reduce species from becoming endangered.

Ruskin's only bill to fail passage on the floor was AB 493, The Clean Car Discount Act. This bill would have created a market-based program to provide consumers incentives to purchase cleaner cars instead of dirtier ones. A June 6th vote on the bill fell only a handful of votes short.

"It often takes time to educate people – including legislators – about the wisdom of a new proposal. I will



continue working with my colleagues and will bring this idea back next year, as part of my ongoing efforts to ensure California is a leader in fighting global warming," Ruskin said.